

**The Eurasia Consort**  
**A Concert for the Dunhuang Foundation**  
December 17, 2020  
7 p.m. ET

**East Asia: Tang Dynasty (7c – 10c)**

*Bodhisattva*

*The Wine-Puppet*

*Liangzhou*

*Lady of Changsha*

*Tilted Cup Music*

*Night Song*

*Music of the Palace of Yue*

Tomoko Sugawara, kugo and co-director; Rex Benincasa, percussion; Gamin Kang, piri and mouth-organ; James Nyoraku Schlefer, shakuhachi

**Ottoman Empire (17c)**

*Hüseyini Peşrev, "Toz Koparan,"* by Sultan Murad IV (1612–40)

*Hüseyini Peşrev*, possibly by Dmitri Cantemir (1673–1723)

Adem Merter Birson, Turkish ud

**New Music Inspired by the Silk Road (21c)**

*Three Haikai after Basho* by Bun-Ching Lam (b. 1954)

*Sunlight*

*Sound of the Cicadas*

*Autumn Wind*

August Denhard, lutes and co-director; Miyo Aoki, recorder

**Medieval Europe (14c-15c)**

*La Quarte Estampie Royal*

from Bibliothèque nationale, fonds français 844c (14th century)

*Imperayritz de la ciutat joyosa*

from Llibre Vermell (14th Century)

*Lamento do Tristano - La Rotta*

from British Library Add. MS 29987 (14th century)

August Denhard, lutes and co-director; Miyo Aoki, recorder

## About the Music

### East Asia: Tang Dynasty (7c – 10c)

In 2019, August Denhard and I travelled to Dunhuang, and took notes of its many painted caves. The site offers a chance to study Buddhist music, its orchestras and circumstances. The Dunhuang Foundation sponsored our trip, which started out from Shanghai. Neither of us had ever been there before, but growing up in Japan, it was not far from my horizon. The trip had long been my dream. I was very grateful to the Dunhuang Foundation to offer me this opportunity. I wanted to study its pictures drawn not long after the end of Tang. Being surrounded by images of Buddhist Paradises inspired us to imagine the music of the Tang Dynasty.

In my 20s I learned about the Japanese Emperor's treasure house, the Shosoin in the city of Nara. It has beautiful Tang Dynasty music instruments. They were brought from China and used at the eye-opening ceremony for Todaiji, the largest and richest temple in Japan. They were recognized as the finest instruments, and soon were put into the Shosoin. (In fact, it is the oldest museum in the world. The collection of musical instruments comprises harps, lutes, winds, mouth-organs, shakuhachi and percussion.)

After that, it became my dream to revive the ancient Asian harps in the Shosoin and make Tang court music come alive again. Tang music moved into Japan. In a sense it still exists, known as Gagaku music. But the tunes seem to have altered considerably over 1300 years. The latter have been deciphered through the efforts of modern scholars such as Laurence Picken (and his Ph.D. students) at Cambridge University and Chen Yingshi (Shanghai Conservatory of Music), and Yi Dong in China. Picken also established the idea that tempi have slowed drastically in the 1100 years since Tang.

Tang music survives not only as Gagaku music but also as Tang music manuscripts in Japan. Some were made in the 9th, some were from the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th century. On the other hand, in the beginning of the 20th century Tang music manuscripts were found from the Dunhuang cave.

I work from these transcriptions and supplement them by orchestrations seen on pictures of Tang Dynasty ensembles and orchestras (for examples seen in Dunhuang). Pictures give us not only music ensemble information but sometimes also tempi of the music from dancers.

Here we play pieces transcribed by three scholars. I would also like to honor the Japanese musicologist/pioneer Kenzo Hayashi. He proceeded other scholars when working on manuscripts found among the bunches of scrolls at Dunhuang.

Tomoko Sugawara

## Ottoman Empire (17c)

*Hüseyni Peşrev, “Toz Koparan,” by Sultan Murad IV (1612–40)*

Ottoman sultans were trained not only in war and government affairs but also in the arts. Many sultans were also well-regarded poets, architects, and even arguably the most famous sultan of all, Suleiman the Magnificent (1494–1566), was a jeweler. This *peshrev* ("instrumental overture" in Ottoman Turkish) in the mode Hüseyni, is by the Ottoman Sultan Murad IV (reigned from 1623–40). It is part of a famous collection of musical notations by Dmitri Cantemir (1673–1723) that accompanies a theoretical treatise in which Cantemir explains in great detail the seventeenth-century Ottoman practice of *makam*, or musical modes. Cantemir was a Moldavian prince that lived in the Ottoman court as part of a diplomatic exchange. While there, he learned Turkish music and became known as a composer and performer of the *tanbur*. That the sultan's composition was included in his treatise meant that it held a special place in the performed repertory of the palace. The subtitle “Toz Koparan” means “dust remover,” and refers to a very windy place, perhaps a plain or sand dune. The *peshrev* is preceded by a *taksim* (improvisation) in the *makam* Hüseyni inspired by the music presented in the treatise.

*Hüseyni Peşrev, possibly composed by Dmitri Cantemir (1673–1723)*

A second selection from Cantemir's collection of notation provides a contrast to the previous work, as it is in a quicker tempo and in 7/8, a meter known as *devri hindi*. This meter is felt as an initial long beat of three eighth-note pulses, followed by two short beats of two pulses, giving it a quality known in Turkish as “aksak,” or limping. The *makam* is Hüseyni, though the piece features modulations to other *makam*-s appropriate to the style of composition in the Ottoman court during the seventeenth century. Cantemir's treatise lists no composer for this *peshrev*, leading scholars to speculate that it may have been by him.

Adem Merter Birson

## New Music Inspired by the Silk Road (21c)

Originally written for tenor recorder and koto, this work was commissioned by the CrossSound Festival at Nürnberg with support from the Guggenheim Foundation in 2003. It is in three movements, inspired by selected haikus of Basho from “Back Roads to Far Towns.”

- I. *Sunlight*  
How inspiring  
the green leaves young leaves of a  
sun's resplendency
- II. *Sound of the Cicada*  
Silence itself is  
in the rock absorbing  
cicada sounds

III     *Autumn Wind*  
Tomb you also move  
my own voice's lamenting  
the autumnal winds

Bun-Ching Lam

### **Medieval Europe (14c-15c)**

*La Quarte Estampie Royal* survives in the *Manuscrit du Roi*, a French manuscript from the mid-to-late thirteenth century. The estampie was a type of monophonic dance music characterized by its repeated sections, called *puncta*, which conclude alternatingly with “open” and “closed” endings. These endings are generally the same or very similar throughout, while the *puncta* provide more melodic and rhythmic variation.

*Imperayritz de la ciutat joyosa* comes from the fourteenth-century manuscript *Llibre Vermell de Montserrat*, a Catalan collection of songs in praise of the Virgin Mary. Although we present it as a purely instrumental performance, this piece uses two different texts – “Imperayritz de la ciutat joyosa” and “Verges ses par misericordia” – sung simultaneously, a typical characteristic of the early motet.

With the *Lamento di Tristano* and *La Rotta*, we return to monophonic dance forms that use repeated *puncta* concluding with “open” and “closed” endings. This pair comes from an Italian manuscript from the late fourteenth century. The two pieces share melodic material, while also presenting a pleasing contrast of character conveyed by aspects such as different length of *punctum* and rhythmic variation.

Miyo Aoki

For more information about the Eurasia Consort:

[www.eurasiaconsort.com](http://www.eurasiaconsort.com)